

(Where do Seven Islands Cod Come From?)

(By YVES JEAN)

CATCHES OF COD in the summer of 1960 were at an all time low for draggers fishing in the southwestern Gulf of St. Lawrence. In search of better grounds, some draggers started fishing on the North Shore of the Gulf, between Seven Islands and Natashquan. Catches were somewhat better there. Dragger fishermen continued going north in 1961 and 1962 when fishing off the Gaspé was poor.

LEARNING ABOUT FISH TRAVELS

Are Seven Islands cod present there only in summer, or do they stay the year round? If they move out, where do they go?

To answer these questions about 1500 cod were tagged off Seven Islands in October 1961. Twin yellow plastic disks familiar to most fishermen were used.

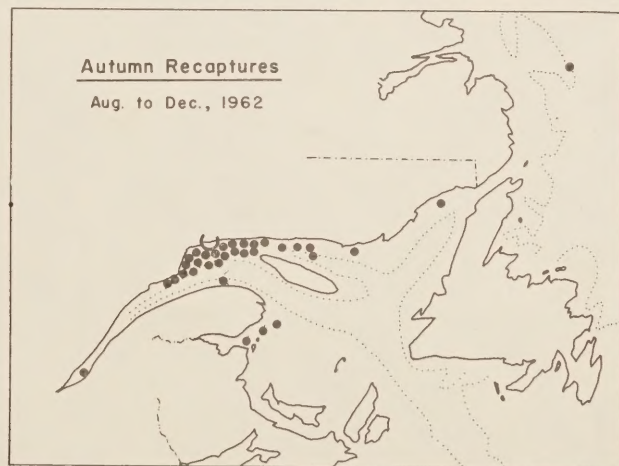
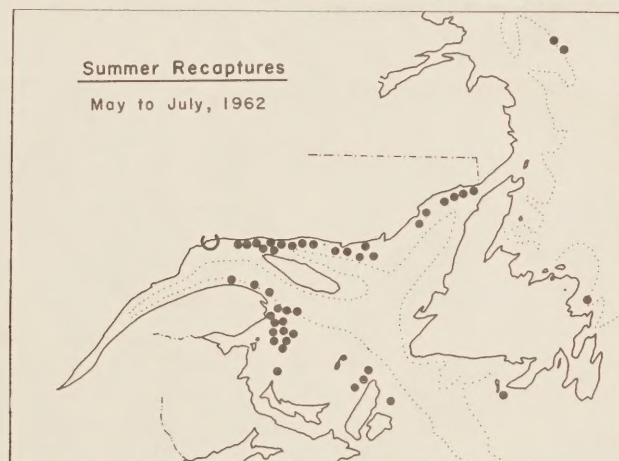
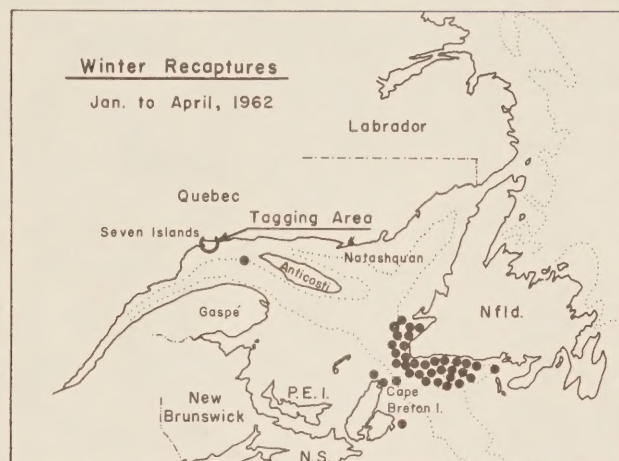
From October to December 1961, immediately following tagging, 36 tagged cod were taken close to the place of tagging. These are not shown on the charts in the opposite column. By the end of 1962, 10 per cent of all tags were recovered.

TAG RETURNS IN 1962

WINTER: From January to April 1962, 37 tagged fish were caught. Most of them had travelled to the Cape Ray area on the southwest corner of Newfoundland, a distance of at least 300 to 400 miles (see upper map, opposite). Some of these cod must have travelled at least three to five miles per day. Four tagged cod had crossed the Laurentian Channel and were caught off Cape Breton. One was caught off Anticosti in late April.

SUMMER: During the summer (May to July) 45 more tags were recovered. About half came from the North Shore between Seven Islands and the Strait of Belle Isle and the other half from off the Gaspé around Bonaventure Island. Two were caught on the Labrador Coast and one on each of the east and south coasts of Newfoundland (see middle map, opposite).

AUTUMN: From August to early December 1962, 34 more tags were reported. Of these, 27 had been caught on the North Shore of the Gulf, mainly near Seven Islands. Six were caught off



Gaspé in the southwestern Gulf and one off Labrador (see bottom map, preceding page).

CONCLUSIONS

The first year returns give us some preliminary answers to our questions. Seven Islands cod--at least some of them--move outside the Gulf in winter. They travel mainly to the southwest coast of Newfoundland where they are fished heavily by Canadian and European trawlers. In summer some of them return again to the North Shore of the

Gulf of St. Lawrence, mainly in the Seven Islands area. Others, however, are caught across the Laurentian Channel, off the Gaspé coast. Some wanderers also leave the Gulf by way of the Strait of Belle Isle.

Just what route the fish take is still in some doubt. Most seem to remain on the east and north sides of the Laurentian Channel. Some appear to cross the channel and mix with the Gaspé stock. Further tagging should lead to a better understanding of the migrations of the North Shore cod. ✓
